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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the characteristics of 14 second language institutes available to adults in Sana'a (Yemen), an area in which second language instruction has historically been difficult to obtain. Data were gathered through interviews and observation. It was found that seven of the institutions offer English instruction, and five offer Arabic instruction to expatriates. Four external governments (United Kingdom, United States, France, and Germany) and a number of private organizations, some established by former Peace Corps volunteers, offer instruction. Teacher qualifications, program design, evaluation, teacher pay, and tuition vary considerably across programs. Very few of the institutes prepare their own instructional materials; most used commercially published materials. Commonly-used Arabic materials are listed. Results indicate that program directors, teachers, and students concur on several language instruction issues: programs need to hire trained language teachers; in-service workshops on teaching techniques and curriculum development are needed; teachers should be paid for preparation time; and teachers should be able to observe colleagues teaching and to try new teaching techniques without fear for their jobs. All 14 institutes are listed, and addresses are provided for 11 of them. Contains 11 references. (MSE)

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LANGUAGE INSTITUTES IN SAṆA'A, YEMEN

Patricia S. Kuntz

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Abstract

This paper investigates the development of language institutions in Sana'a, Yemen. This research identifies the descriptive variables for comparison of services in language instruction. Findings of this study provide preliminary evidence that, in the case of this sample, adult students have a wide variety of programs from which to select; however, most instructors are not trained in language instruction or curriculum development.

LANGUAGE INSTITUTES IN SANA'A, YEMEN

Public education for the most part began in the 1960s in Yemen (al-Ireyani, 1987).[1] In former Northern Yemen (Yemen Arab Republic), the Ministry of Education was created in 1963 and the University of Sana'a opened in 1970 with the Faculty of Education. However, for many adults, language instruction other than Arabic in the city of Sana'a was relatively difficult to obtain. This difficulty reflected the educational policy of the Imams prior to the revolution. Imam Yahya and Imam Ahmed sought to limit the introduction of western culture including the formal instruction of languages other than Arabic. Consequently, the instruction of English in secondary schools is a recent addition.[2] French and German are available only at private schools or at the tertiary level. Nevertheless, many aspiring university and secondary students who seek employment with international organizations find that proficiency in another languages is critical.

This article describes 14 language-learning institutes available to adults in Sana'a, the capital. The questions for this study were:

1. Which institutions offer language instruction?
2. What were the origins of the institutes?
3. What are the credentials of the teachers of the languages?
4. What is the organization of the program?
5. What are the goals of the students?
6. What is the pay for teachers?
7. What is the tuition?
8. What were the materials for instruction?

Method

This study involved interviews and observations in order to obtain descriptive data. Between October and December of 1996, this author collected the data with sponsorship from the American Institute for Yemeni Studies (AIYS).

Interviews. Initially, the author arranged appointments to visit the director of each institute. Several teachers were interviewed at the AIYS house rather than at the institute. In addition, the author tried to identify previous instructors and present instructors for each institute.

Observations. At some institutes, the author observed various levels of instruction. The author recorded notes concerning time for each activity, number of times students talked, the grouping of students, and the types of questions asked of students. The author observed various types of visual aids used to convey meaning.

Materials. At several institutions libraries provided additional books and periodicals. The author sought to identify the type of electronic equipment available and used by teachers and students. Some programs provided textbooks as part of tuition while other required additional payment for textbooks. Only the British Council and the French Cultural Center required students to use the language laboratory as part of their training.

Supplementary information. In some settings the author colected additional information. Several institutes hosted workshops for current instructors and for aspiring teachers. Two institute directors permitted the author to survey students and

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teachers about the beliefs they hold about learning a language.

Results and Discussion

Language instruction is booming in Sana'a. Expatriates (non-Yemeni citizens) and Yemenis have begun language institutions to meet the needs of adults.

1. Which institutions offer language instruction?

Although additional institutions exist, the author contacted a teacher or the director at 14 language programs. Seven institutions offer English instruction for Yemenis and expatriates. Five institutions offer Arabic to the expatriate population. In addition to several universities, the cultural branch of the French and German embassies provide language instruction for primarily Yemenis.

2. What were the origins of the institutes?

Four governments provide language instruction through the public relations office of their overseas operation. The British Council organized the first language service in 1973 (Smith, 1996). The United States (Yemen-American Language Institute/YALI) and France (French Cultural Center) have offered language services for more than six years. Most recently, the German Embassy has begun to provide instruction on location or at the British Council.[3]

Several private institutions have evolved from staff with previous language-teaching experiences or degrees in linguistics. For instance for English instruction, a former director and instructor at the United States program (YALI) founded the Modern

American Language Institute (MALI).

The United States Peace Corps language training program has inspired several instructors to create their own programs for Arabic instruction. These institutes include the Yemen Language Center (YLC) and the language program of the University of Science and Technology. Many of the materials are adaptations from those developed for Peace Corps volunteers of the 1980s.

Other programs have resulted from a demand by non-governmental organizations for employees to receive language instruction or from adults seeking specific levels of proficiency to meet university entrance requirements. These institutions include the Yemen International Language Institute, the Yemen University, Queen Arwa University, the University of Sana'a, the English Language Institute, Farouk Institute, and the Yemen-American Foreign Language Institute.

3. What are the credentials of the teachers in language acquisition?

The instructor credentials vary depending upon the scope of the curricula and the demand for service. For instance, instructors at the British Council and the French Cultural Center hold certificates/or degrees in second language acquisition. In addition, prior to their employment in Yemen, they have had experience in language teaching to non-native speakers. In order to prepare students for Cambridge exams or TOEFL in English and the DELFs in French, the instructors attend recertification workshops annually. The British and French instructors collaborate with

staff of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Sana'a by conducting training workshops for students of English.[4] For the past several years, the British Council staff have conducted in-service training for staff at YALI and for student teachers or graduate students in the Faculty of Education.

4. What is the organization of the program?

Classes are held generally for up to four hours per day. Instructors may teach individual tutorials and/or classes up to 20 students. Instruction is designed for a 50 minute segment with short breaks after each segment. Some programs require homework and language laboratory (computers and video activities). Most institutes have a library of books and magazines in the target language. The British Council and the French Cultural Center also maintain a professional language teaching collection for their instructors. However, assignments often are not corrected, since teachers are paid only for class instruction. Some institute adhere to a strict attendance requirement and report end of term grades to a company funding the student's program. Some programs conduct oral proficiency interviews for class placement purposes. However, most final exams are in written format and test vocabulary and grammar.

5. What are the goals of the students?

Each institution has different methods of evaluation to assess the success of its students. Some institutions such as the YLC provide written exams that contain a listening component. Students oral proficiency is not be tested formally as part of the end-of-

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term evaluation. In contrast, the French Cultural Center prepares students to pass the French standardized French proficiency exams (DELF I and DELF II) that rank students for admittance into universities in France. YALI provides TOEFL (exam for admittance to U.S. universities) at a cost to the student.

6. What is the pay for teachers?

Instructor pay varies with the goals of the institution. The salaries ($20,000) of the British Council and French Cultural Center instructors reflect the full-time professional nature of their employment. Moreover, these expatriate instructors receive salaries in hard currency (their home country and U.S. dollars) and standard benefits for health insurance, retirement, and vacation. For these reasons as we as visa limitations, few instructors hold any other jobs. Teachers at YALI receive between $7 and $12 depending upon seniority but they receive no benefits.

In contrast to this pay schedule, instructors at most other institutions receive lower pay in riyals (250 YR) and no benefits. Therefore, most of these instructors work part-time on an hourly basis, which tends to result in a frequent change in staff.

7. What is the tuition?

Tuition varies by institution based upon the number of weeks of instruction. The YLC has the highest tuition rate at $1200 per 10-week course. It caters to the American and European undergraduate students who are accustomed to high rates for similar courses at their home universities. Most of the other institutions offer instruction that is in line with the Yemen economy or the

ability for government agencies to pay.

8. What were the materials for instruction?

Very few institutions prepare their own materials. Most use published materials from the target language country or from other countries. Programs for Arabic instruction commonly use textbook series produced in the United States, United Kingdom, Tunisia (Bourguiba Institute), or Egypt (American University in Cairo) such as:

Abboud, P. (1976). *Elementary Modern Standard Arabic*, (rev.ed.). Ann Arbor, Mi: University of Michigan, Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Abboud, P. (1971). *Modern Standard Arabic*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Department of Near Eastern Studies.

El Said, M. (1983). *Al-Kitaab Al-Asaasi, I*. Tunis, Tunisia: Arab League.

El Said, M. (1985). *Al-Kitaab Al-Asaasi, II*. Tunis, Tunisia: Arab League.

Anon.(1997). *Arabic Course*. London, UK: Linguaphone Institute.

Some of the teachers of Arabic are incorporating visuals from English as Second Language programs.

Institutions for English instruction use one of three sets of materials that incorporate either the United States culture (*Crescent* and *Spectrum*) or the United Kingdom culture (*Headway*). The programs for French and German utilize materials published in France and Germany to teach immigrants.

Conclusion

The directors, teachers, and students concurred on several issues concerning language instruction in Sana'a. First, programs need to hire teachers who are trained in second-language acquisition. The fact that a teacher is a "native" speaker of the

language or has studied linguistics of the target language does not necessarily lead to successful instruction. Second, those teachers who are struggling to teach a language wish to have paid pedagogical workshops that focus on specific instructional strategies and training on curriculum development. This effort could form the basis of a "Yemen Language Teachers Association." Third, students expect homework and want it to be corrected. Such a sentiment requires the payment to teachers for preparation time. Finally, teachers want not only opportunities to observe peers at other institutions in Sana'a but also opportunities to test new ideas without fear of being fired. Although there is much to do in collaborating with colleagues, much has been done in building the infrastructure. It may become common practice in Yemen for language teachers to use technology to share information about teaching their target language. Likewise, their students may practice language skills via computers with peers around the world.

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Notes

1. The British introduced primary and secondary schools in southern Yemen during their regime. Students began learning English as part of their training. After the departure of the British, the Soviet Union in collaboration with the government encouraged the instruction of Russian. Many Yemenis returned from the Soviet Union with degrees by 1970.

2. Two private or semi-private international/university schools provide limited instruction in French and German. The British Council offers an after-school program for children.

3. The Russian Embassy and the Chinese Embassy were contacted; but no information was available concerning language instruction.

4. Brendan McSherry (Director of the British Council) plans to host a meeting to create a "Yemen Language Teachers' Association" comprising secondary and tertiary level instructors.

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Appendix

Language Institutions in Sana'a

INSTITUTE	DATE	COST	WEEKS	LEVELS	LANGUAGES
British Council	1973	$250	6/48 hrs	15	[English]
English Language Institute (ELI)					[English]
Farouk Institute	1993	5000 YR	8/36 hrs	3	[Arabic/English]
French Cultural Center	1990	3000 YR	7/32 hrs	10	[French]
German Embassy	1996	$100	6/48 hrs	4	[German]
Ministry of Defense		? Gov.	3/45 hrs	3	[German]
Modern American Language Institute (MALI)	1995	8000 YR	8/80 hrs	9	[English]
Queen Arwa University	1995				
Department of English		6000 YR			[English]
University of Science and Technology	1995				
Language Center		$300	10/200 hrs	5	[Arabic]
University of Sana'a	1970s				
Department of English		?	12/36 hrs	adv.	[English]
Department of French		?	12/36 hrs	adv.	[French]
Language Center (Dept. of Linguistics)		?	4/24 hrs	3	[Arabic]
Yemen American Foreign Language Institute	1993?				
Military School (YAFLI)		? Gov.	10/100 hrs	3	[English]
Yemen American Language Institute (YALI)	1990?	$130	10/100 hrs	6	[English]
Yemen International Language Institute (YILI)	1989	$200	6/120 hrs	9	[English/French]
		$350	9/180 hrs	9	[Arabic]
Yemen Language Center (YLC)	1989?	$1200	10/200 hrs	9	[Arabic]
Yemen University	1996				
Faculty of Languages & Literature		variable	12/36 hrs	adv.	[English/French]

180 YR = US $1 (12/1996)

Sana'a Addresses

British Council
Brendan McSharry, Dir.
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P.O. Box 2157
tel. 967 1 244-121/2
fax. 967 1 244-120

Farouk Institute
Farouk Al-Warad, Dir.
Al-Raqas St.
P.O. Box 3636
tel. 967 1 209-721
fax. 967 1 209-721

French Cultural Center
Charles Philippe, Dir.
Al-Adel Street # 8
P.O. Box ?
tel. 967 1 271-666

German Embassy (Ministry of Defense)
Judith Labs, Dir.
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